

My Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Religious,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ, especially the family of Msgr. Hawkes,

With all the conviction of our faith, we repeat this evening with St. Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory." And with St. Paul we give thanks to God "for giving us the victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ."

It was just 11 days ago that a number of us were gathered together in Rome. Monsignor Hawkes was there, and he seemed very happy.

We were celebrating together with our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, the feast of the Triumph of the Holy Cross. We were celebrating it in the context of an ecclesial event - which in that case was my own Ordination as a Bishop.

We heard our Holy Father speak about

- the mystery of salvific love,
- of how Jesus is lifted up upon the Cross so that man may live,
- and of the need to bear witness to the Cross of Christ.

And today, by a great coincidence of God's Providence, by an act of his holy will, we are once again celebrating the Triumph of the Holy Cross. The Triumph of the Holy Cross as it is revealed

- in Christ's salvific love,
- in his Will to bring Monsignor Hawkes to eternal life.

The reality of death is truly swallowed up in victory - and for this victory we give thanks to God: a victory given through Jesus Christ and through his Holy Cross.

Our own assembly here, performing an act of Christian mourning, becomes an assembly praising God in faith and love for the Christian death of Monsignor Hawkes: this death was the culminating act of his life in which he was united definitively with the death of Christ and with his Resurrection, and in which he now shares Christ's victory.

In our act of praise, we thank God again "for giving us the victory through Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yes, the victory is the victory of Christ and his Cross,

- a victory communicated now to Monsignor Hawkes,
- and a victory that belongs to us, too, as the Christian community of family, friends, parishioners, co-workers and brother Priests who knew Monsignor Hawkes, loved him, were served and helped by him.

And so, his death becomes a true ecclesial celebration of life - eternal life - connected with the victory of Christ and the triumph of his Holy Cross.

In his death we see the consummation of his Baptism and his priesthood, the supreme purification of his life of generous service to the Church in Los Angeles, to many dioceses and to the universal Church in Rome.

What we glorify at this hour is the power of Christ's grace to give him eternal life in his own Resurrection. We magnify the mercy of God who called him to eternal life. In the words of the Psalm: "Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption."

We magnify the power of God that created all the splendid good that was in his generous heart,

- the power of God that forgives whatever needs forgiveness,
- the power of God that purifies whatever needs purification.

In a word, we glorify the victory of the Cross and the mystery of Christ's salvific love in the life and death of a beloved friend, a priest of God - Benjamin Hawkes.

Today, because of this victory of Christ, because of the Triumph of the Holy Cross, Benjamin Hawkes, in his perishable nature puts on imperishability, and in his mortal nature puts on immortality, and death is swallowed up in victory. And as we praise God for the victory in which we all participate, as a community in Christ, we praise him for all that was accomplished for the good of others through the life of Monsignor Hawkes:

- not that he had no faults or failings,
 - not that he did not make mistakes like all of us,
- But rather, despite the human condition, or rather precisely in it, grace triumphed in his fidelity to the Church,

in his perseverance until the end,
in his dedication to duty, and
in a charity that certainly covers any sin.

And so, with magnanimity and gratitude, the Church recalls his memory and concentrates on the grace of Christ which made him what he was in the Church of God.

As the years go by and as so many aspects of the truth of his life unfold more clearly - as truth is wont to do - we will praise even more that grace and mercy of the Lord through which he entered into victory with Christ and into eternal life with Mary and the angels and the Saints.

Monsignor Hawkes, dear Ben, assembled in this church of St. Basil's which you loved so much, and gathered around your consecrated body, we pledge ourselves to the unity in faith and charity, of this Archdiocese which you served so long, and of the whole Catholic Church, with John Paul our Pope and Roger our Bishop. As we keep alive the memory of your life and the triumph of Christ's Cross in your death, we ourselves wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ! Amen.

Los Angeles, September 25, 1985

ARCHBISHOP JUSTIN F. RIGALI